CLAIMS

SuB A1

1. ~~A method of playing recordings of spoken alphanumeric characters in sequences, said method comprising the steps of:~~

   (i) ~~receiving a sequence of alphanumeric characters to be played;~~

   (ii) ~~accessing a template comprising a sequence of fields, each field representing part of a sequence of alphanumeric characters and said template comprising information about the manner in which a sequence of alphanumeric characters is to be played;~~

   (iii) ~~accessing a database of fragments, each of a plurality of said fragments being a recording of a spoken alphanumeric character as spoken at a particular location within an utterance;~~

   (iv) ~~for each character in said received sequence of alphanumeric characters, selecting a fragment on the basis of the accessed template; and~~

   (v) ~~passing said selected fragments to a player and playing the fragments.~~

2. ~~A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said accessed template is selected from a database of templates on the basis of the received sequence of alphanumeric characters.~~

3. ~~A method as claimed in claim 2 wherein the templates in said database are prioritised.~~

4. ~~A method as claimed in claim 2 wherein at least some of the templates in said database contain specified alphanumeric characters in at least some of the template fields.~~

5. ~~A method as claimed in claim 4 wherein said accessed template is selected from the database of templates by matching at least some of the received sequence of alphanumeric characters with specified alphanumeric characters in the template fields.~~

6. A method as claimed in claim 3 wherein said accessed template is selected from the database of templates on the basis of the priority of the templates as well as on the basis of the received sequence of alphanumeric characters.

7. A method as claimed in claim 2 wherein said database of templates comprises sets of templates each set being suitable for use with a particular type of alphanumeric character sequence.

8. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said template information about the manner in which a sequence of alphanumeric characters is to be played comprises information about pauses.

9. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said step (i) of receiving a sequence of alphanumeric characters further comprises receiving values of one or more parameters.

10. A method as claimed in claim 8 wherein one of said parameters specifies a type of alphanumeric character sequence.

11. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said alphanumeric character sequence is selected from: a telephone, directory or subscriber number; a credit card or debit card number; a zip code or post code; an area or country code; a telex number; an account, membership, staff, customer, supplier or user number; a social security or national insurance number; a personal identification number (PIN), security number or pass code; a call or message identifier; a date or time; an age or duration; a length or volume; a monetary amount; a sort code; a tax code or rate; an interest rate; an exchange rate; a company registration number; a meter reading; a serial number; an inventory number; a policy or contract number; a loyalty scheme point quantity; a stock control identifier (skuID), part number or product code; a stock quantity, weight or measure; an order, booking, tracking, receipt, invoice or job number; a vehicle registration mark; a road number; a map or grid reference; a building, flat, floor or room number; a post office box number or internal mailstop code; a flight number; a stock ticker symbol; a telephone keypad

sequence; a version string; an email address; an international standard book number (ISBN); an international standard serial number (ISSN); a globally unique identifier (GUID); a digital object identifier (DOI); a formal public identifier (FPI); an internet protocol (IP) address; and a universal resource identifier (URI).

12. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said database of fragments comprises at least four fragments for a plurality of said alphanumeric characters.

13. A method as claimed in claim 11 wherein said four fragments are a recording an alphanumeric character at each of the following positions within an utterance, where a subgroup is a part of an alphanumeric character sequence: start of a subgroup; middle of a subgroup; end of a subgroup; and end of an utterance.

14. A method as claimed in claim 2 wherein if said selected template is incompatible with said received alphanumeric data sequence, then said template is adapted to be compatible with the received alphanumeric data sequence.

15. A method as claimed in claim 1 whereby the alphanumeric character sequence is received, the method of claim 1 completed and the sequence played in real time.

16. An apparatus for playing recordings of spoken alphanumeric characters in sequences, said apparatus comprising:

(i) an input arranged to receive a sequence of alphanumeric characters to be played;

(ii) a processor arranged to access a template comprising a sequence of fields, each field representing part of a sequence of alphanumeric characters and said template comprising information about the manner in which a sequence of alphanumeric characters is to be played;

(iii) said processor being further arranged to access information about fragments, each of a plurality of said fragments being

a recording of a spoken alphanumeric character as spoken at a particular location within an utterance;

(iv) said processor being further arranged, for each character in said received sequence of alphanumeric characters, to select a fragment on the basis of the accessed template; and

(v) an output arranged to pass information about said selected fragments to a player which is arranged to play the fragments.

17. An apparatus as claimed in claim 16 wherein said player is arranged to access the selected fragments from a database of fragments.

18. An apparatus as claimed in claim 16 wherein said player is provided by an interactive voice response (IVR) system.

19. An apparatus as claimed in claim 16 wherein said processor is integral with an interactive voice response (IVR) system.

20. A communications network comprising an apparatus as claimed in claim 16.

21. A computer program arranged to control a processor and player in order to play recordings of spoken alphanumeric characters in sequences, said computer program being arranged to control said process and player such that:

(i) a sequence of alphanumeric characters to be played is received;

(ii) a template is accessed comprising a sequence of fields, each field representing part of a sequence of alphanumeric characters and said template comprising information about the manner in which a sequence of alphanumeric characters is to be played;

(iii) a database of fragments is accessed, each of a plurality of said fragments being a recording of a spoken alphanumeric character as spoken at a particular location within an utterance;

(iv) a fragment is selected for each character in said received sequence of alphanumeric characters, said fragment being selected on the basis of the accessed template; and

(v) said selected fragments are passed to the player which plays the fragments.

22. A computer program as claimed in claim 20 which is stored on a computer readable medium.

23. An automated directory number enquiry system comprising an apparatus as claimed in claim 16.